

“THE BLESSING OF SELECTION”

‘Grace Is The Key’ Series

(Ephesians 1:4-6)

Intro ... This morning we continue our journey through the Apostle Paul’s ‘Epistle to the Ephesians’. As I mentioned last week there are **twelve key verses** that will ‘escort us’ through this great revelation of Divine Truth. Twelve verses that each ‘open the door’ to a unique section of this great New Testament Book – Twelve verses that when taken all together and in order will help us think our way right through its content.

Last week we identified the first and here it is again.

OUR FIRST KEY ‘ESCORT’ VERSE ...

*“Praise be to the **GOD** and **FATHER** of our Lord Jesus Christ
Who has **BLESSED** us in the **HEAVENLY** Realms with
Every **SPIRITUAL** Blessing in **CHRIST.**”*

(Ephesians 1:3)

What a tremendous statement – it’s worthy of memorization and meditation.

Last Sunday we unlocked it and drew from it Six Wonderful Grace-Fueled Insights.

However, in addition to being a tremendous verse in its own right, this third verse of chapter one also ‘opens the door’ and then serves as our ‘escort’ into an awesome set of verses (4-14) which identify **four** of those ‘Spiritual Blessings’ that come to us ‘in Christ’ – four blessings designed to bring great joy to every Born-Again Child of God.

The first is found in ...

TODAY’S KEY PASSAGE ...

*“For He (The Father) **CHOSE** us in him (Jesus) before the creation
of the world to be **HOLY** and **BLAMELESS** in His Sight.*

*In love He predestined us to be **ADOPTED** as His sons through Jesus Christ,
in accordance with His pleasure and will to the praise of His **GLORIOUS** Grace
which He has **FREELY** given us in the **ONE** He loves.”*

(Ephesians 1:4-6)

Here now is ...

OUR ESCORT TEXT APPLIED TO TODAY'S PASSAGE ...

*Praise Be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with ... the **BLESSING** of **SELECTION**.*

This is the first of **Four Great Spiritual Blessings** that Paul identifies in this opening section – four great blessings that come to all those who are 'in Christ'.

Out of ***Today's Key Passage*** arise

FIVE FAITH-DEFINING DECLARATIONS OF DIVINE TRUTH ...

Here is the ***First ...***

1. SELECTION Has Always Been A Fundamental FUNCTION Of The Father

Our Heavenly Father does not just '*let things go*' – Our Heavenly Father did not just create the universe and then '*sit back and watch*' – Our Heavenly Father has taken a proactive role from '*Before the Beginning*'.

Here's how the Apostle Paul expressed it ...

*"He (the Father) **Chose** ... Before the **Creation** of The World"*

Before the **First Moment** of Creation, God the Father looked down through time and foresaw all that would ever take place: ***the Rebellion*** of a portion of His Own Heavenly Host led by Lucifer, the star of the morning ... ***the Creation*** of a perfect world and of an awesome Creature made in His Own Image called Man ... ***the Fall of Man*** and the ***Curse*** the Father Himself would place upon the earth ... ***the Promise*** He would give of ***ONE*** who would someday come and defeat both sin and death ... ***the Rise of a People*** that he would call '*His Own*' and the distinctive nation that they would become ... ***the moments*** of that nation's ***glory*** and the ***years*** of that nation's ***shame*** ... ***the Sending of His Own Son*** into the world to do for man what man could no longer do for himself – live a pure and holy life ... the ***Sacrifice of that HOLY ONE*** on Calvary's Cross to pay for the sins of the world and to make possible the rise of a truly Holy People in whom His Own Spirit would dwell and finally ... ***the resistance*** of fallen man's will and the ***spiritual blindness*** of fallen man's heart and the ***foolishness*** of fallen man's mind.

All this God the Father foresaw before the first star was ever flung into space; before Adam and Eve ever took their first breath.

Way back then, the Heavenly Father made some **decisions** about how things would have to go if His Desire for a People of His Own was to ***ever*** be realized.

He made some choices – definite choices ... eternal choices consistent both with His Own Nature and with the Coming Order of Things.

One of those choices Paul identifies in the verse we reflect upon this morning.

“**He** (the Father from His Eternal vantage point) **chose us** (everyone who through faith would one day be declared righteous in His Sight) **in Christ.**”

So here’s the **second** great life-defining **declaration** that arises from this great passage of Scripture:

2. The Father’s Selection Has Always Been THROUGH JESUS.

“He (the Father) chose us **IN HIM** (Jesus) ...”

All who have ever been chosen (whether they knew it or not) have been chosen ‘*in Christ*’ ... Christ has always been the **ONE** through whom and by whom and in whom Saving Grace could be extended – the only **ONE** in whose name forgiveness could be granted. Selection ‘*in Christ*’ has always been the Father’s Method.

So if you are following what I am saying here, then you will understand when I say ...

“When God chose **Abraham**, he chose him ‘*in Christ*’.”

“When God chose **Moses**, he chose him ‘*in Christ*’.”

“When God chose **David**, he chose him ‘*in Christ*’.”

“When God chose **Isaiah**, he chose him ‘*in Christ*’.”

For the simple yet awesome fact is ...

“**Whomever** the Father has chosen, **whenever** the Father has chosen him,
The Father has chosen him ‘*in Christ*’.”

Jesus has been in the Father’s mind and heart the whole time ...
From eternity past until the present moment.

And so we can say today, August 25, 2013, even as the Apostle said in his letter to the Ephesians so long ago ...

“**He** (long before any of us was born) **chose us** (those of us here at *Sonlife Community Church* who through faith have been declared righteous in His Sight) **in Christ.**”

Rejoice in this Declaration that the Father’s Selection Is and Has Always Been ***Through Jesus!*** His Selection is not based on works or family heritage or church affiliation or any other possibly impressive thing.

Here's a **Third Declaration**:

3. The Father's Selection has always been intended to PRODUCE HOLINESS

*"For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be
HOLY and BLAMELESS in His sight."*

Now what I'm about to say is viewed by some in our lackadaisical contemporary Christian world as almost heresy but praise God it's still seen as an absolute '*no-brainer*' by others.

God has always wanted a '*People He Could Be Proud Of*' ... A people who brought honor not dishonor to his Name.

To use our current terminology, God has always been seeking to produce in the midst of this fallen world some '*Law-Loving, Law-Embracing, Law-Keeping Citizens of His Heavenly Kingdom*'.

You see, it is not and never has been acceptable to God to simply take a bunch of sinful people for whom His Son died, declare them to be righteous in His Eyes and then Close His Eyes Tight so that He, like the monkey with his hands over his eyes, would '*See no Evil*' anymore.

God's choice of us 'in Christ' is so that we might become 'like Christ' so that He in turn might receive honor and glory through our lives even as He received (and still receives) glory through Christ's life.

He wants His People to be the kind of people who cause the unsaved world to '*sit up and take notice*' ... people who are '*sought out*' and '*valued*' ... people who '*give God a good name*' as in '*I thank God for you people*'.

And the truth is when we are '*holy and blameless in God's sight*' we generally are seen that way by those around us and that's the kind of people God has always wanted to have identified with Him ... He chose us for that very purpose – to be '*holy and blameless*'.

Recognize and be **challenged** by the fact that '*The Father's Selection has always been intended to Produce Holiness*' – both positionally and practically.

Now that challenging recognition leads us quickly to announce the **fourth declaration** that arises from this key passage:

4. “The Father’s Selection Has Always Been ACCOMPANIED BY GRACE.”

And by that I mean both the ‘unmerited favor’ that brings forgiveness to those who do not deserve it and the ‘overcoming power’ that brings godly behavior to those who would otherwise never get anywhere near it.

You can’t even begin to embrace the idea of seeking to live a life that is pleasing to God and that is a blessing to others without realizing that ‘*in and of ourselves*’ we are not able.

We are far too familiar with failure to anticipate very much success. We need more than just the knowledge of God’s Choice if we are going to even approach fulfilling His stated purpose for choosing us. We need more than just forgiveness.

Here’s how Paul put it ...

“In love, he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with His Pleasure and Will to the praise of His Glorious Grace which he has freely given us in the One He Loves.” (vs. 5-6)

In this verse Paul turns to a well-known practice in the Roman world – the practice of adoption which was generally practiced by some noteworthy man who having no heir of his own found someone worthy in his eyes and adopted him into his family and gave to him all the privileges that any son of his own flesh would have had.

The idea here is that there is both a transfer of identity and an assumption of responsibility. The adopted son is now identified with his adoptive father and is expected to live in light of this new identity. As adopted son he assumes the responsibility of carrying on the name of the family with the expectation that he will bring honor to that name. Along with his new identity also comes all the family authority.

Now Paul knows that it’s through the new birth that we become full, natural members of God’s family (he points that out in chapter 2) but here he uses this legal identification terminology to make the point that the ‘*new identity* (which we receive in Christ) *brings with it new responsibility*’.

God’s glorious grace brings a transforming power into the lives of all whom it truly touches ...

God’s Glorious Grace delivers us not only from the **Penalty** of Sin but also from the **Power** of Sin. And that’s where the rubber starts meeting the road and the **practice** of Grace-Fueled Living starts showing up and **praise** to God starts going up.

For this purpose God has chosen us from before the creation of the world – that His Grace displayed in our lives might bring great praise to Him.

Rejoice that the Father’s Selection of us has been ‘*Accompanied by the Riches of His Grace*’ and thus we are enabled to fulfill the very purpose that the Father had in mind when He Selected Us!

Here now is the ***fifth and final Declaration*** ... Following on the heels of the first four, it should strike us also as a 'no-brainer' – a powerful and obvious conclusion to this discussion though some would say it's tough to wrap their minds around. Here it is ...

5. The Father's Selection Has Always Been A SURE THING!

Paul writes ... *"In love, he predestined us to be adopted as his sons ..."* (vs. 5)

It's in the very nature of God for God to **cause** to happen the things that he has **chosen** to happen. God didn't say in the beginning 'Let there be light' and then wait and wonder if any light was going to show up.

God did not (before the Creation of the world) 'chose us in Christ' and then wait and wonder if any of us would respond to the Gospel Message.

It's all part of one wonderful, awe-inspiring, worship-generating God-Designed Program ... God has foreseen man's need; God has foreseen man's rebellious, resistant heart; God has foreseen the Willing Sacrifice of His Son; God has foreseen the transforming power of His Enabling Grace; God has foreseen the wonders of Christ's Church; God has foreseen the Glory that will arise in Praise to His Glorious Grace and so ...

God has decreed (predestined, if you will) that such an outcome would take place.

As sure as the Law of Gravity, is the certainty that the things that God has decreed **to** take place **will** in fact **take** place! His Selection 'In Christ' of a People that will bring Glory to His Name is one of those things.

So out of this three-verse-passage identifying the ***Blessing of Selection*** have arisen these ...

FIVE POWERFUL FAITH-DEFINING DECLARATIONS OF DIVINE TRUTH ...

1. Selection Has Always Been A Fundamental Function of the Father
2. The Father's Selection Has Always Been Through Christ
3. The Father's Selection Has Always Been Intended To Produce Holiness
4. The Father's Selection Has Always Been Accompanied By Grace
5. The Father's Selection Has Always Been A Sure Thing!

These are awesome truths indeed – truths worthy of deep reflection and meditation – these are truths that professors and theologians have spent their entire lives investigating (and even debating).

However, these truths are of more than mere 'academic interest' for the more successfully we can 'wrap our minds' around these incredible Faith-Defining Declarations of Divine Truth, the more we will experience what I'm calling this morning ...

Three Heart-Satisfying Outcomes!

As a result of 'wrapping our minds' around these Declarations we will experience a sense of ...

SECURITY – The Father did the choosing; The Father does the keeping.

STABILITY – Knowing that I have been 'Chosen in Christ' keeps me from 'selling my soul' to those who peddle mere earthly promises.

SERENITY – Condemnation has been eliminated; Eternal Life has been granted; Daily Grace is being provided; My Heavenly Father is in charge. Why worry?

Not Bad – Not Bad At All!

So now we come to the thing that might be running around in many a person's mind ...

TODAY'S MOST IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION ...

How do I **KNOW** if the Father has **SELECTED ME?**

Can I **KNOW** for **SURE?**

Indeed you can ... The Father absolutely wants you to know for sure.

That sense of ***Security*** and ***Stability*** and ***Serenity*** depends upon it.

THREE DIAGNOSTIC QUESTIONS ...

* Have you **ACCEPTED** Jesus Christ as your Savior from the **PENALTY** of Sin?

(The '*unselected*' consider the Gospel to be foolishness – the '*selected*' embrace the truths of the Gospel for their '*eyes are opened*' and their '*hearts energized*'.)

"No one can come to me unless the Father draws him." (John 6:44)

* Have you **RESPONDED** to the Christ's Call upon your life: '*Follow me*'?

(The '*unselected*' are involved in following their own '*life path*' not His – the ears of the '*selected*' hear Christ's Call like sheep hear the call of their shepherd.) "*I have revealed you (Father) to those that you gave me out of the world. They were yours and you gave them to me ... I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them.*" (John 17: 6, 8)

* Are you **SEEING** some **PROGRESS** – Are you **GROWING** in **GRACE?**

(The '*unselected*' remain '*trapped in sin*' – '*bound up in blindness*' – the '*selected*' find themselves hungering and thirsting for the life that pleases God and they find that that hunger and thirst is being satisfied – change is happening.)

"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come."

(2 Corinthians 5:17)

Final Thought ... Blessed indeed are those who have experienced the
BLESSING of the **HEAVENLY FATHER'S SELECTION!**